Some Passenger and Freight Transportation Revenues Trended Differently from Each Other During the Pandemic

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When the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic on March 11, 2020, countries struggled to stop its spread: sports teams canceled entire seasons, schools closed, workers began working from home and countries sealed their borders.

In contrast to the performance of many industries catering to passenger transportation, Scheduled Freight Air Transportation and Freight Transportation Arrangement, saw revenues increase from 2019 to 2020.

Lockdowns and travel restrictions had a significant impact on the transportation industries but not all segments. Unlike freight transportation industries, estimated revenues for industries supporting passenger transportation saw no increases from 2019 to 2020, according to the 2021 Service Annual Survey (SAS).

Passenger Transportation Industries

Scheduled Passenger Air Transportation estimated revenue for employer firms declined 60.0% from $206.8 billion in 2019 to $82.8 billion in 2020.

As COVID-19 vaccines were rolled out in early 2021 and some travel restrictions were lifted, the industry began to see a resurgence: revenues increased 60.1% to $132.5 billion.

Table 1.

Estimated Revenue of Employer Firms for Select U.S. Passenger Transportation Industries: 2019–2021

(In millions of dollars)

Industry	2019	2020	2021
Scheduled Passenger Air Transportation	206,768	82,765	132,534
Nonscheduled Chartered Passenger Air Transportation	16,376	15,015	19,022
Deep Sea Passenger Transportation	26,502	9,497	5,476
Coastal and Great Lakes Passenger Transportation	703	611	799
Inland Water Passenger Transportation	578	455	491
Travel Arrangement and Reservation Services	65,756	34,238	46,436

Note: Data not adjusted for price changes. Differences in revenue estimates may be attributed to sampling and nonsampling error rather than to underlying economic conditions. Caution should be used in drawing conclusions from estimates and comparisions shown. Information on survey methodology, including sampling and nonsampling error, sample design and confidentiality protection can be found at <www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sas/technical-documentation/methodology.html>. The Census Bureau has reviewed this data product to ensure appropriate access, use and disclosure avoidance protection of confidential source data (Project No. P-7502871, Disclosure Review Board (DRB) approval number: CBDRB-FY22-330).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 Service Annual Survey.

From 2019 to 2020, revenues for the Nonscheduled Chartered Passenger Air Transportation industry dropped about 8.3% for employer firms.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted the activity of cruise companies. This is evidenced by the 64.2% decrease in revenues for the Deep Sea Passenger Transportation industry from 2019 to 2020.

Travel Arrangement and Reservation Services is another industry primarily serving modes of passenger transportation. Revenues of employer firms dropped 47.9% to $34.2 billion in 2020 from $65.8 billion in 2019.

As with passenger air transportation, this industry’s revenues began to recover in 2021, increasing 35.6% to $46.4 billion for employer firms.

Freight Transportation Industries

In contrast to the performance of many industries catering to passenger transportation, Scheduled Freight Air Transportation and Freight Transportation Arrangement saw revenues increase from 2019 to 2020.

Despite obstacles like labor shortages, disruptions in port operations, and changes to working conditions among others, some freight transportation industries thrived with the help of increased demand and higher prices.

Revenues of employer firms in the Scheduled Freight Air Transportation industry were $7.6 billion in 2021, up 14.9% from 2020 and 17.2% from 2019. Deep Sea Freight Transportation revenues were $6.9 billion for employer firms in 2021, an 8.8% increase from 2020 and a 9.3% increase from 2019 estimate.

venue of Employer Firms for Select U.S. Freight Transportation Industries: 2019–2021
ollars)

Industry	2019	2020	2021
t Air Transportation	6,519	6,651	7,643
artered Freight Air Transportation	4,846	4,857	4,987
Transportation	6,296	6,323	6,882
t Lakes Freight Transportation	8,089	7,091	7,623
ght Transportation	6,588	5,834	6,004
rucking, Long-Distance, Truckload	124,566	126,768	152,443
rucking, Long-Distance, Less Than Truckload	51,897	50,515	60,003
ht (except Used Goods) Trucking, Local	46,794	44,650	51,209
ht (except Used Goods) Trucking, Long-Distance	43,153	40,480	46,959
ation Arrangement	130,184	144,365	199,827

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sus Bureau, 2021 Service Annual Survey.

More SAS Data

The latest 2021 SAS includes estimates and accompanying measures of sampling variability and sheds some light on additional industries like those outlined in this article.

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